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**UNHCR**  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

## **Ending Statelessness by 2024 – Pledges, Action and Results**

*Open briefing session: 17 October 2018, 11.30 a.m. to 1 p.m.*

Statelessness, or the absence of a nationality, affects some 10 million people globally. There is no region on the planet that does not have significant numbers of stateless persons.

In addition to the indignity of being without a nationality, stateless persons are persons denied basic rights. For stateless men and women, boys and girls, access, for example, to education or health care can be a real challenge. Their exclusion from citizenship marks their lives, and those of their families and communities, in dramatic ways. Yet, while statelessness is a serious problem, it is one that can be resolved with relatively simple changes in national law and practice.

Statelessness can result from a variety of causes, including conflict of laws, transfer of territory, civil registration laws, discrimination in nationality laws or administrative practices, and lack of birth registration. Many of the world's stateless persons are also victims of forced displacement. Indeed, people who have been uprooted from their homes are particularly vulnerable to statelessness, especially when territorial borders are redrawn. And statelessness can itself be a root cause of forced movement. Nevertheless, when one looks more closely at the causes of statelessness, one common feature stands out—solutions exist and are in the hands of States; solutions are in the hands of governments and parliaments.

In 2014, UNHCR launched the *#Belong Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024*. The *Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: 2014 - 2024* establishes a guiding framework of 10 actions to be undertaken by States, with the support of UNHCR and other stakeholders to:

- resolve existing major situations of statelessness;
- prevent new cases of statelessness from emerging; and
- better identify and protect stateless populations.

Legal reform is a powerful tool to resolve and prevent statelessness. Adequate legal frameworks can avoid childhood statelessness entirely; eliminate discrimination on the basis of sex, which can lead to statelessness; establish procedures to identify stateless persons and facilitate their naturalisation. Accession to the two UN Statelessness Conventions generally helps ensure that standards are in place in domestic frameworks that prevent and reduce statelessness. Parliamentarians therefore have a vital role to play in contributing to putting an end to statelessness.

The year 2019 will be an opportunity to review mid-way developments and achievements to end statelessness. To this end a High-Level Event on Statelessness will be convened in October 2019, on the first day of the annual session of the UNHCR Executive Committee. Between now and October 2019, States are invited to pursue efforts and prepare pledges that can be presented at the high-level event.

Against the backdrop of a growing willingness by States to take action, the IPU and UNHCR are hosting side event to raise awareness of parliaments of their role in the process, and more generally on their role in contributing to ending statelessness by 2024. The session will provide an opportunity to take stock of recent developments, highlighting progress achieved as well as remaining challenges. It will also focus on strategies for parliaments to strengthen their action in this global effort.

The open briefing session is organized within the framework of the work of the IPU Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law. The Committee has been mobilizing IPU Members around statelessness for the past years. The Committee is working with UNHCR in developing a handbook for parliamentarians on model legislation to address statelessness. The session should therefore offer an opportunity to contribute to the development of the handbook and should also result in identifying possible concrete steps that parliamentarians and others can take to prevent and reduce statelessness.

### **Panellists:**

- Moderator: Ms. S. Tadjbakhsh, Deputy Director, UNHCR
- Senator B. Nasarre, Spain
- Senator A. Zani, Kenya
- Ms. N. Haidar, Member of the CEDAW Committee
- Mr. C. Nash, Director of the European Network on Statelessness

Reference documents:

IPU-UNHCR Handbook for Parliamentarians on Nationality and Statelessness,  
[www.ipu.org/english/handbks.htm#stateless](http://www.ipu.org/english/handbks.htm#stateless)